

RELEASED IN FULL

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ACTION ARA-01

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SJK-01 CTME-00 C-01 DODE-00 DS-00 FBO-01 HA-09  
H-01 IMMC-01 INRE-00 INR-01 L-03 ADS-00 M-01  
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OCS-06 OMB-01 OPR-01 PA-02 PM-01  
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P 261535Z FEB 92  
FM AMCONSUL MARACAIBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3289

UNCLAS MARACAIBO 0050

E.O. 12056 N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, VE  
SUBJ: MARACAIBO POST-COUP ATMOSPHERICS

REF: KAPLAN/JENKS 25 FEB TELCOM

1. SUMMARY: THOUGH LIFE HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL IN WESTERN VENEZUELA IN THE WAKE OF THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT, RUMORS OF PRO-COUP ACTIVITIES PERSIST. LEAFLETS IN SUPPORT OF THE COUP ATTEMPT CONTINUE TO APPEAR SCATTERED ON THE STREETS IN DOWNTOWN MARACAIBO. END SUMMARY.

2. OUTWARDLY MARACAIBO AND WESTERN VENEZUELA HAVE RETURNED TO COMPLETE NORMALCY. HOWEVER, THE FIRST TOPIC OF ANY CONVERSATION  
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IS THE COUP. DISGUST AT CORRUPTION IS THE THEME OF EVERY CONVERSATION WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE COUP. THE PREVAILING FEELING AMONG ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY IS THAT SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE.

3. SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF THE REBELS IF NOT OF THEIR METHODS EXTENDS TO ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION WHO LIVE IN THE SLUMS SURROUNDING MARACAIBO FEEL THAT THINGS CERTAINLY COULD NOT GET ANY WORSE. OUR CONTACTS IN THE BARRIOS TELL US THAT ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LET OFF STEAM (AND MAYBE LOOT A SUPERMARKET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
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OR TWO).

4. THE WEALTHY FOLK WHO FREQUENT THE POSH CLUBS OF MARACAIBO WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO MAKE A KILLING NO MATTER WHO RUNS VENEZUELA, AND HAVE CONTINUED WITH THEIR DANCES AND PARTIES ALL THROUGHOUT THE LAST FEW WEEKS OF RUMORS. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE CLOSE CONTACTS IN THE MILITARY AND EXPRESS SYMPATHY FOR WHAT THEY FEEL HAS BEEN SHABBY TREATMENT OF LOYAL SOLDIERS WHO SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT IN SUPPRESSING THE COUP.

5. THE SECTOR OF THE POPULATION THAT IS MOST AFRAID OF THE PROSPECT OF ANOTHER COUP IS WHAT REMAINS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN MARACAIBO. THEY TALK OF THE LACK OF RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE SCHOOLS, WHERE EVEN CHILDREN SAY THAT CAP WAS ONLY GETTING WHAT HE DESERVED. DISGUST AT RAMPANT CORRUPTION IS THE PRINCIPAL THEME OF CONVERSATIONS AMONG THIS GROUP. NONETHELESS, THERE IS LITTLE SYMPATHY AMONG THE MIDDLE CLASS HERE FOR MILITARY MANDATED CHANGE.

6. MEANWHILE THE FEBRUARY 25 TRANSPORT STRIKE WAS SUCH A SUCCESS IN ZULIA THAT CERTAIN GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED FOR THE DAY. HOODED PROTESTORS TORE UP POSTERS FOR STUDENT ELECTIONS AT THE

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UNIVERSITY. LEAFLETS EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF THE COUP PLOTTERS STILL APPEAR ON THE STREETS OF DOWNTOWN MARACAIBO EVERY DAY. SOME LOCAL BUSINESSMEN RECEIVE THESE DOCUMENTS BY FAX FROM ANONYMOUS SOURCES.

7. RUMORS OF STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS FOR THE FEBRUARY 27 ANNIVERSARY OF THE RIOTS OF 1989 ABOUND. WHILE FEW EXPECT RIOTS, MANY STOCK UP ON RICE, BEANS AND OTHER NECESSITIES JUST IN CASE. SOME PEOPLE ARE EVEN STORING WATER AND BUYING CANDLES IN ANTICIPATION OF POSSIBLE FAILURE OF ELECTRICITY AND WATER.

8. COMMENT: THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE OVERALL SITUATION IN HAND IN WESTERN VENEZUELA, THE GENERAL FEELING AMONG ALL SECTORS OF THE POPULATION IS THAT SOMETHING MORE MUST BE DONE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO GAIN THE TRUST OF THE POPULATION. THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF ANTICIPATION HERE AS EVERYONE WAITS FOR THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT. JENKS

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